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Viewing cable 09MANAMA151, BAHRAIN: SCENESETTER FOR THE SECRETARY'S MEETING

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09MANAMA151**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09MANAMA151	2009-03-13 17:04	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Manama

Appears in these articles:

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RHBVAKS/COMUSNAVCENT

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000151

SIPDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/13/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [IR](#) [AF](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: BAHRAIN: SCENESETTER FOR THE SECRETARY'S MEETING
WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

Classified By: CDA Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) Summary and introduction: Bahrain's strong ties with the U.S. are the key to the country's security, and it has long been a solid military and diplomatic partner. The Bahraini leadership is enthusiastic about the Obama administration's early engagement in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmad Al Khalifa will be eager to throw Bahrain's (admittedly modest) weight behind your priorities in order to get off on the right foot with the new administration. He will also provide you with insight into intra-Arab maneuverings on Gaza relief, and on the region's dealings with Iran. Shaikh Khalid participated in your meeting with King Hamad in Sharm March 2. End summary and introduction.

¶2. (C) Iran: Shaikh Khalid recently visited Tehran, where he publicly accepted a semi-apology for an Iranian official's remarks about old claims to Bahrain. In private, the GOB is alarmed by Iran's nuclear program and what it views as Tehran's growing influence in the region. Shaikh Khalid will welcome the prospect of U.S. engagement with Tehran, but will request that GCC governments be kept in the loop if any U.S.-Iran dialogue on regional security develops. Resource-poor Bahrain is continuing slow-motion negotiations, underway for several years, for the potential purchase of Iranian natural gas if no other suppliers can be found.

¶3. (C) Gaza relief: King Hamad ordered that all Bahraini private and government donations for Gaza be funneled through a royal commission, in order to prevent direct funding to Hamas. Bahrain pledged USD 23 million at Sharm, but has not yet clearly explained to us what mechanisms it will use to ensure that its aid does not indirectly strengthen Hamas. Bahrain will likely follow the Saudis' lead on this question, as on many others.

¶4. (SBU) Human Rights: Shaikh Khalid will meet with Sen. Isakson's office to address concerns there that dissident Shia are being mistreated. Bahraini authorities have detained about 30 Shia in connection with an alleged bomb plot uncovered in December. The GOB has not yet made public all its evidence, but the authorities claim some of the accused trained at a camp in Syria. Among those awaiting trial are two leaders of the radical Haq movement, which asserts that Bahrain's constitution is illegitimate, and urges Shia to boycott parliament. Most of Bahrain's Shia majority reject Haq and support the moderate Wifaq party, which presses for redress of Shia grievances through non-violent protest and electoral politics.

¶5. (S) Guantanamo detainees: All Bahraini detainees are back home, and Bahraini authorities, helped by the

ex-detainees' family networks, are ensuring they stay away from politics. The GOB is still considering our recent requests that Bahrain now take Tunisian and Syrian detainees. The Bahrainis worry that foreign ex-detainees would be hard to control, and might rally local Sunni extremists. Ambassador Williamson will visit Manama March 18-20 to press this issue.

16. (C) Afghanistan police: King Hamad told you in Sharm that Bahrain wanted to send police to help in Afghanistan. The Interior Ministry here says it has in mind sending about 30 policemen to serve as guards for a coalition facility. Embassy Kabul and the U.S. military are studying the offer; it might be too small to justify the support costs.

17. (C) Anti-piracy: The King also told you at Sharm that Bahrain could send its sole frigate to help coalition efforts off Somalia. We have thanked the Bahrainis and told them we are considering the offer; however, we think the frigate might need \$20-30 million worth of refurbishment first. Bahrain would have trouble footing this bill, and U.S. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Bahrain this year was only \$3.9 million.

18. (C) Israel: Bahrain has no official ties with Israel, but Shaikh Khalid has had meetings and frequent phone contact with Tzipi Livni. Bahrain's Israel boycott office was closed in 2006 as required by the U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement. During the Gaza conflict some in parliament pushed for a resumption of the boycott, but the GOB has ignored these calls. Shaikh Khalid, at last year's UNGA General Assembly, proposed a new regional organization that would include both Iran and Israel, without preconditions. Despite a tepid response from Arab governments, the proposal remains on the table.

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19. (S) Open to Additional Facilities for the U.S. military: Bahrain hosts the headquarters of NAVCENT and the Fifth Fleet - about 2500 U.S. personnel - and permits easy access for U.S. military aircraft to its Shaikh Isa airbase. We understand CENTCOM is considering Shaikh Isa as a potential, partial alternative to Manas in Kyrgyzstan. We think the Bahrainis would respond positively if asked.

Visit Embassy Manama's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/manama/>

HENZEL